The reason why nothing has grown from this root is this: that an individual proprietor is always alive to his interests, while a community is, on the contrary, sleepy and sterile; the interests of an individual are a matter of simple instinct; those of a commune demand virtue, and virtue is rare. Since 1790 the 36,000 communes are but 36,000 orphans, heiresses of the old feudal privileges, neglected or plundered these .ten years by the municipal tutors of the Convention and of the Directoire. They have stolen from the roads, from the pathways, from the trees, from the churches. What would become of the communes if this went on another ten years ? The first duty of a Minister of the Interior is to stop an evil which will otherwise infect these 36,000 members of the social body.

The first condition, when dealing with a great evil, is to diagnose carefully its gravity and its incidents. The Minister of the Interior will therefore begin by drawing up a general schedule of the situation of the 36,000 communes of France. We have never had such a schedule. Here are the principal heads to be set down.

There will be three classes: Communes that are in debt; communes whose accounts balance; communes with assets. The last two classes are not numerous, and their case is not pressing. The real question is how to clear the communes that are in debt.